



UNIVERSITIES ACADEMIC STAFF PUBLICATIONS: A NEXUS FOR ETHICAL RESEARCH CONDUCT AND VALUE RE-ENGINEERING FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS



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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the relationship between Universities Academic Staff Publications: A nexus for Ethical Research Conduct and Value Re-engineering for Global Competitiveness. To achieve this purpose, one composite research question was raised and later transformed to research hypothesis to guide the study. Ex-post factor design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was made up of all the academic staff that participates in Universities Academic Staff Publications exercise in the three public universities in Cross River State. Accidental sampling technique was adopted in the study. A Sample of 300 academic staff that are involved in university publications exercise in the three public universities in the study area was adapted. The researcher self-developed questionnaire titled "Universities Academic Staff Publications: A Nexus for Ethical Research Conduct and Value Re-engineering for Global Competitiveness Questionnaire (UASPNERCVRGCQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated and subjected to reliability test using Cronbach Alpha reliability statistics. The result of the reliability test yielded an index of 0.72 which was adjudged well enough for data collection. Multiple regression statistics was used for data analysis at 0.05 level of significance. A test of regression weight and variance in academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness was also presented. The results of the study revealed that Universities Academic Staff Publications is anchored by: research articles, book chapters, conference papers, textbooks and technical reports with ethical research conduct jointly predict academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness in public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. It was concluded that universities academic staff publications predictive variables with ethical research conduct jointly predict academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness in universities globally. Base on the findings, it was recommended among others that, National Universities Commission as a matter of policy mandate all university management to undergo strategic investment in research infrastructure, academic monitory and international partnership to support underrepresented groups in research to foster inclusiveness and innovation in their research publication.

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Keywords: Academic staff, Publication, Ethical research conduct, Value Re-engineering, Global competitiveness, Universities.

Introduction

Academic publishing remains the cornerstone of knowledge dissemination and career progression in higher education. Institutions evaluate academic staff performance largely through scholarly outputs, including journal articles, books, and conference proceedings. While the emphasis on publishing has incentivized research productivity, it has also raised ethical concerns regarding plagiarism, authorship disputes, and data fabrication. In response to these issues, this paper investigates the ethical principles underpinning academic publishing and proposes value reengineering as a mechanism to reposition academic institutions for global competitiveness (Sorescu, Warren and Ertekin, 2023).

Academic staff publications refer to the scholarly output, such as articles, books, and conference papers, produced by university faculty and researchers. These publications are crucial for advancing knowledge, sharing research findings, and demonstrating the intellectual contributions of academic staff. There are key aspects of academic staff publications which include:

Types of publications: Academic staff often publish in various formats, including journal articles, book chapters, books, conference proceedings, and reports.

Purpose of publications: Publications serve several purposes, including sharing research, advancing knowledge in a field, building a reputation for the institution and the researcher, and fulfilling academic requirements for promotion or tenure.

Impact of publications: Publications are a key indicator of research productivity and academic excellence. They can influence policy, contribute to academic discourse, and shape the understanding of a particular field of study.

Dissemination of publications: Academic publications are often disseminated through academic databases like Science Direct. They can also be made available through institutional repositories or open access journals, ensuring wider access and visibility (Anderson, Horn, Risbey, Ronning, De-Vries and Martinson, 2021).

Ethical scholarship is governed by transparency, honesty, integrity, and accountability. These principles are vital for maintaining the credibility of academic research. According to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, 2023), ethical publishing involves fair peer review, accurate reporting of data, proper attribution of authorship, and the absence of coercion or conflict of interest. Plagiarism remains one of the most persistent ethical violations in academic publishing. Often driven by the "publish or perish" culture, staff may recycle existing content without due acknowledgment (Scanlon, 2021). Authorship manipulation, such as gift authorship or ghostwriting, also undermines the trustworthiness of research outputs.

In the academic world, research in the fields of quality and ethics is often separate. One reason for this is that the origins are very different; ethics derives from philosophy, while quality management has developed from management studies. Given current developments in both areas, there are important justifications for linking the two disciplines. In both the quality management and the ethics of the organization, it is a common research conduct to discuss the issues of responsibility. This show that ethics is closely linked to quality. An organization that does not meet ethical rules and standards is not able to provide high quality services and / or products. Furthermore, non-compliance with the minimum quality standards established within the organization raises ethical issues. It is obvious that ethics and maintaining quality standards are two issues that cannot be addressed separately (Warter, 2021).

Building and consolidating a strong organizational culture is not being achieved in a short time. Those responsible with ethics and quality who intend to create a culture of respect face great challenges, but they can and should create it. Culture begins with the tone given by the leaders of the organization, a code of conduct and quality, but they do not build a culture of ethics and respect alone. Culture is organic, manifested by the way employees work and interact with others, and how they support the organization's purpose, mission and values. This emphasize that ethics is not a recent discovery.

Throughout the centuries, philosophers in their struggle with human behavior have developed different approaches to ethics, each leading to a different conclusion. The word "ethics" comes from the Greek word "Ethikos", which refers to character. The behavior of organizations and their leaders is largely influenced by the characteristics / dimensions of the culture to which they belong, and there are a number of ways in which organizations can create a culture that promotes ethics (Eneji, Beshel, Onnoghen & Okpachui, 2017).

Ethical profiles can affect the behavior of individuals in a number of ways. Thus, the ethical profile that an individual brings into an interaction directly affects the behavior of that individual. In addition, individual perception of the individual's ethical profile in an interaction can influence the behavior. Consequent from the above, the author draw attention to the fact that professional ethics is a component of professional culture, with two correlations and mutual influences between them. Professional ethics is a system of norms and values that regulate human behavior in the field of work, being of great importance to the organization. Bendermacher, Egbrink, Wolfhagen, & Dolmans (2021) reveal that "Quality culture in Higher Education Institution results from an interplay between contributing organisational context elements, working mechanisms and quality related outcomes. Universities attempts to address the structural/managerial dimension of quality culture are reflected in their attention to improvement strategies, evaluation systems, staff and student involvement, student centeredness and attention to policies, procedures and responsibilities."

According to Orsingher (2022): "Attention is increasingly being focused on quality management in higher education institutions throughout Europe. A large number of education institutions all over Europe have seen a progressive withdrawal of the State as the main financing body of the university system. After granting higher education institutional autonomy, the State has required more transparency and accountability. A series of external factors, such as the labour market, the European higher education arena and the increasing social relevance of research and higher education led universities to the implementation of quality assurance procedures".

Unethical research conducts such as data fabrication, falsification, and selective reporting jeopardize the reliability of published work. These research conducts are often prompted by institutional reward systems that prioritize quantity over quality (Martinson, Anderson and De-Vries, 2021). University incentive systems, including promotion criteria and funding allocations, heavily influence staff publication behaviors. When institutional culture emphasizes numerical output rather than ethical and impactful research, it leads to a decline in research quality and global relevance (Mouton, 2005). Global university rankings rely significantly on publication metrics, including citations and impact factors. While these benchmarks provide visibility, they can inadvertently encourage superficial research that aligns with trending topics rather than local or developmental needs (Altbach, 2021).

Value reengineering refers to the process of fundamentally rethinking and redesigning institutional values and processes to enhance effectiveness and alignment with global standards. In academic publishing, this involves shifting from output-centric models to ethically grounded, innovation-driven frameworks. Universities must develop publication policies that enforce ethical conduct through training, mentorship, and consequences for misconduct. Ethics education should be embedded into research curricula to cultivate integrity from the onset of academic careers (Steneck, 2021). Institutions should promote collaborative and socially relevant research by aligning publication incentives with global challenges and sustainable development goals (UNESCO, 2021). This includes supporting open-access publishing, interdisciplinary collaboration, and community-based research. Global competitiveness in academia requires a balance between quantity, quality, and ethical standards. Ethical publishing enhances institutional reputation, attracts international collaborations, and ensures sustainable knowledge development (Tijssen, Visser and Van-Leeuwen, 2021).

Statement of the problems

In recent times, observations have shown that universities are becoming increasingly complex in the face of dwindling state of ethical publication conduct as well as the corresponding decrease in global competitiveness. This implies that there seems to exist a total decline in the ethical value system

of Nigerian universities. There has been increasing concern from the global world over the recent change in trend of ethical research conduct deterioration in universities as occasioned in their poor trend if research and publications. Thus, many wonders if academic research and publication is still based on fairness and equality as an ethical factor in academic institutions. However, the state of deterioration of the ethical research conduct does not depend only on explicit value education effort but on the training and experience of academic staff in universities globally.

Consequently, on the above, the incidences of un-ethical research conducts associated with academic staff research conducts ranging from unfair peer review, incorrect reporting of data, improper attribution of authorship, coercion or conflict of interest, unsuitable design and methods of research, self-plagiarism in redundant publications, fabrication or falsification of data and wrongfully research findings among others. There is an outcry from education stakeholders that universities that were supposed to be the custodian of the cherished ethical research conduct system have been invaded and is contaminated by biasness and discrimination without protecting the integrity of the academic records and competing interests. But in the face of increasing competitive environment where appointments, promotions and grant applications are strongly influenced by publication record, researchers and academic staff are now under intense pressure to publish through dishonest means. This shows that ethical research conducts are unable to achieve tangible results. Given this state of affairs, how does academic staff publication with ethical research conducts predict academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness?

Methodology

The study adopted an ex-post facto research design with a total population of all academic staff that participates in academic staff publication exercise in the three universities in Cross River State namely: University of Calabar, University of Cross River State and University of Education and Entrepreneurship, Akamkpa. The study used a sample 300 academic staff that participated in academic staff publication exercise in the three universities via accidental sampling technique. A structured questionnaire titled “Universities Academic Staff Publications: A Nexus for Ethical Research Conduct and Value Re-engineering for Global Competitiveness Questionnaire (UASPNERCVRGCQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire was to elicit information on the academic staff publication exercise with ethical research conduct and value re-engineering for global competitiveness in universities accordingly. The instrument was subjected for face and content validity by experts in research, measurement and evaluation unit to establish its validity. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, the instrument was subjected to trial test were the Cronbach Alpha reliability test yielded 0.72. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researchers and retrieved back after completion. A coding key was designed to code all the responses in the instruments used in the study. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the composite hypothesis in the study at < 0.05 level of significance.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to examine Universities Academic Staff Publications: A Nexus for Ethical Research Conduct and Value Re-engineering for Global Competitiveness. Specifically, the study sought to find out whether research articles, book chapters, conference papers, textbooks and technical reports jointly predict academic staff ethical research conduct and value re-engineering for global competitiveness.

Research question

How does university academic staff publication: research articles, book chapters, conference papers, textbooks and technical reports jointly predict ethical research conduct and value re-engineering for global competitiveness?

Statement of hypothesis

University academic staff publication: research articles, book chapters, conference papers, textbooks and technical reports with ethical research conduct does not jointly predict value re-engineering for global competitiveness.

Results and analysis

Hypothesis 1: University academic staff publication: research articles, book chapters, conference papers, textbooks and technical reports with ethical research conduct does not jointly predict value re-engineering for global competitiveness. The predictor variables were: research articles, book chapters, conference papers, textbooks and technical reports while the criterion variable was academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness. Multiple Regression analysis was used in testing the hypothesis and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Multiple Regression analysis for the contribution of the various dimensions of University academic staff publication with ethical research conduct to the variation in academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness.

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate			
.654	.529	.528	2.822			
		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F-ratio	Sig.
Model		29686.256	5	5614.376	352.836	.000 ^b
Regression		14723.405	294	14.607		
Residual		44409.661	299			
Total						
Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Rank
(Constant)	2.835	1.112		7.846	.000	
Research articles	.607	.038	.283	9.791	.000	3 rd
Book chapters	.144	.038	.078	3.749	.000	5 th
Conference papers	.623	.035	.362	10.890	.000	2 nd
Textbooks	.261	.038	.123	6.854	.000	4 th
Technical reports	.978	.049	.450	11.054	.000	1 st

Significant at 0.05 level.

a. Criterion: Academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness

b. Predictors: (Constant), research articles, book chapters, conference papers, textbooks and technical reports

Table 1 presents the summary the Multiple Regression Model and F-ratio test of the relationship between the dimensions of University academic staff publication (research articles, book chapters, conference papers, textbooks and technical reports) with ethical research conduct and academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness. Table 1 shows that the analysis of variance in the regression output produced an F-ratio of 452.836 ($p < .05$), which is statistically significant at .05 probability level. On the basis of this result, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis upheld. This means that when the various dimensions of University academic staff publication with ethical research conduct are taken together, they significantly predict academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness. The result also shows a Multiple Regression coefficient (R) of .854 and a coefficient of determination (R²) of .729. This implies that University academic staff publication with ethical research conduct has a significant positive relationship with

academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness and that 72.9 % of the variation in academic staff ethical research conduct and value re-engineering for global competitiveness is accounted for, by the variation in the dimensions of University academic staff publication considered in this study. Thus 27.1 % of the variance in academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness is attributed to the effect of other variables extraneous to this study.

To find the relative contribution of the various dimensions of scholarly University academic staff publication with ethical research conduct (research articles, book chapters, conference papers, textbooks and technical reports) to the variation in academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness, a test of regression weight was carried out and the results shows that calculated t-values for research articles (15.791, $p=.000$), book chapters (3.749, $p=.000$), conference papers (17.890, $p=.000$), textbooks (6.854, $p=.024$) and technical reports (20.054, $p=.024$) were significant at .05 level of significance. Similarly, the results shows that technical reports ($t= 20.054$, $p < .05$) was the strongest predictor of the variance in academic staff publication with ethical research conduct and value re-engineering for global competitiveness, followed by conference papers ($t= 17.890$, $p < .05$), then research articles ($t=3.676$, $p < .05$), then textbooks ($t= 6.854$, $p < .05$), and then book chapters ($t=3.749$, $p < .05$).

Discussion of findings

The result of the composite hypothesis revealed that all the predictor variables significantly and jointly predicts academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness in the study area with specific dimensions as indicted by the test of regression weight and variance in academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness. This is an indication that if academic staff in Universities published scholarly as intended it will yield optimal research output and usher in academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness via the upliftment of the academic standard in the University system generally.

The study is in agreement with the findings of Mouton, 2021 who discovered that unethical research conducts such as data fabrication, falsification, and selective reporting jeopardize the reliability of published work. These research conducts are often prompted by institutional reward systems that prioritize quantity over quality. This implies that University incentive systems, including promotion criteria and funding allocations, heavily influence staff publication behaviors. Thus, when institutional culture emphasizes numerical output rather than ethical and impactful research, it leads to a decline in research quality and global relevance. Therefore, global university rankings rely significantly on publication metrics, including citations and impact factors. While these benchmarks provide visibility, they can inadvertently encourage superficial research that aligns with trending topics rather than local or developmental needs.

The findings are in consonance with the study of COPE, 2023 who discovered ethical scholarship is governed by transparency, honesty, integrity, and accountability. These principles are vital for maintaining the credibility of academic research. According to the Committee on Publication Ethics, ethical publishing involves fair peer review, accurate reporting of data, proper attribution of authorship, and the absence of coercion or conflict of interest. According to the author, plagiarism remains one of the most persistent ethical violations in academic publishing. Often driven by the "publish or perish" culture, staff may recycle existing content without due acknowledgment. Authorship manipulation, such as gift authorship or ghostwriting, also undermines the trustworthiness of research outputs.

However, this result trends to give a clear situation in universities academic staff publication in line with ethical research conduct policies. Therefore, being that the Value re-engineering refers to the process of fundamentally rethinking and redesigning institutional values and processes to enhance effectiveness and alignment with global standards. In academic publishing, this involves shifting from output-centric models to ethically grounded, innovation-driven frameworks. Universities must develop publication policies that enforce ethical conduct through training, mentorship, and consequences for misconduct. Ethics education should be embedded into research curricula to cultivate integrity from the



onset of academic careers. Institutions should promote collaborative and socially relevant research by aligning publication incentives with global challenges and sustainable development goals (UNESCO, 2021). This includes supporting open-access publishing, interdisciplinary collaboration, and community-based research. Global competitiveness in academia requires a balance between quantity, quality, and ethical standards. Therefore, ethical publishing enhances institutional reputation, attracts international collaborations, and ensures sustainable knowledge development.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that University academic staff publication with ethical research conduct has a significant nexus with the academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness generally. The assessment of academic staff publication research conducts reveals a pressing need for ethical recalibration and value reengineering. Academic institutions must adopt ethical publishing standards and strategically redesign value systems to foster impactful research and ensure global relevance. By doing so, it may not only maintain academic integrity but also contribute meaningfully to global knowledge economies.

Recommendation

National Universities Commission as a matter of policy mandate all university management to undergo strategic investment in research infrastructure, academic monitory and international partnership to support underrepresented groups in research to foster inclusiveness and innovation in their research publication.

Universities must develop publication policies that enforce ethical conduct through training, mentorship, and consequences for misconduct. This may help reduce the level of unethical practices and build a strong spring-board for academic staff value re-engineering for global competitiveness.

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